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Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission for the period 16 June-1 October 2003

I. Introduction

1. The present report provides an account of the activities of the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM) for the final mandate period authorized in Security Council resolution 1490 (2003). Pursuant to that resolution, UNIKOM carried out its tasks from the Mission's rear headquarters at Kheitan support centre in Kuwait City and Camp Khor in the former demilitarized zone. UNIKOM expects that the technical liquidation of its activities will be completed by one month after closure of the Mission.

II. Main developments

2. During the period under review, UNIKOM continued to reduce its staff; provided support to humanitarian assistance operations in Iraq from both the Kheitan support centre and Camp Khor; undertook reconciliation and liquidation of UNIKOM's assets; made arrangements for the handover of its facilities to the host country and United Nations agencies in Kuwait; and finalized preparations for the Mission's liquidation.

3. UNIKOM continued its liaison with relevant Government offices in Kuwait, in particular with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and maintained close working relations with Kuwaiti security and police departments. UNIKOM also attended daily humanitarian information meetings to coordinate with the agencies to which it was providing support and to keep abreast of developments in the Mission's area of operations.

4. UNIKOM continued to carry out regular maintenance of its facilities at the Kheitan support centre, and completed the recovery and reconciliation of assets and property in the former demilitarized zone. Staff regularly visited Camp Khor to undertake repairs and maintenance of facilities there. For security reasons, personnel were unable to visit or recover the assets left in the patrol and observation bases on the Iraqi side of the demilitarized zone. According to reports received by UNIKOM, those patrol and observation bases were extensively damaged or looted in the course of the war in Iraq. UNIKOM representatives visited the former Mission headquarters

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at Umm Qasr, which had also been extensively damaged and looted. The Mission is currently processing documentation relating to those war losses.

5. During the period under review, a major part of the Mission's activities was devoted to providing support to humanitarian agencies operating in Iraq and to the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq.

6. The World Food Programme continued to occupy a small part of the accommodation facilities at Camp Khor for its staff operating in southern Iraq. UNIKOM provided vehicles and other equipment to agencies upon request.

7. After the attack on the United Nations headquarters at the Canal Hotel in Baghdad on 19 August, UNIKOM was requested to provide urgently required assets for the continuation of operations in Baghdad. UNIKOM prepared the materiel, which included prefabricated accommodation, supplies, water tanks and communications equipment, and arranged for its delivery to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). To meet UNAMI's critical requirements, UNIKOM contracted cranes and trucks for the large-scale dismantlement and transportation of patrol and observation bases and other facilities instead of disposing of those assets in situ as was originally envisaged.

8. Support provided by UNIKOM also included coordination with the United States military hospital in Kuwait, which received 18 wounded personnel who had been evacuated from Iraq following the attack on the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad. Assistance was provided to the injured in facilitating contacts with their families as well as coordination with the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad on other support arrangements.

9. As part of its support to humanitarian agencies and programmes, UNIKOM provided at depreciated value 40 vehicles to the United Nations Office of the Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, 12 vehicles to the International Organization for Migration and four vehicles to the World Health Organization. The vehicles were fitted with communications equipment and painted in the prescribed colour for United Nations operations in Iraq. UNIKOM also provided vehicle maintenance, fuel, washing and long-term parking facilities for humanitarian agencies and programmes operating in Kuwait.

10. The security situation in the Mission area, in particular on the Iraq-Kuwait border in the former demilitarized zone, remained quite unstable, with several cross-border incidents occurring. The border between the two countries was closed for two days in mid-August after riots in the Iraqi border town of Safwan. Kuwaiti border police were also put on alert following an exchange of fire between Coalition troops and armed gangs on the Iraqi side of the border. There were reports of Iraqis, including police elements, firing at truck drivers at the border and confiscating vehicles. More recently in southern Iraq, "bandits" were reported to have killed two Kuwaitis and a Syrian, while several others claimed to have been fired upon. During the riots in southern Iraq, demonstrators reportedly damaged Kuwaiti-registered vehicles. There have also been reports of abductions for ransom of some people from Kuwait who were travelling in southern Iraq.

11. The security situation in Kuwait City remained calm. However, there was fear of threat from radical groups or sympathizers of the former Iraqi regime. Following suicide attacks in Casablanca and Riyadh in May 2003 and the arrest of Kuwaiti militants in Saudi Arabia in early June, fear of terrorist attacks against important

installations in Kuwait increased. The Government of Kuwait thus took protective measures around vital infrastructure, such as airports and oil installations.

12. In the aftermath of the terrorist attack on the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad, UNIKOM, with the full cooperation of the Government of Kuwait, took additional measures to protect its facilities and personnel. Those preventive measures included moving UNIKOM personnel to safer accommodation and offices within the Kheitan support centre, reinforcing perimeter fences with concertina wire boundaries and restricting parking in the immediate vicinity of the compound. Armed Kuwaiti police were also positioned outside the Kheitan support centre on a 24-hour basis and close coordination was maintained with the Government of Kuwait and the United Nations System Security Management Team to strengthen security.

III. Organizational matters

13. Major-General Franciszek Gągor, UNIKOM Force Commander, left the Mission area on 7 July 2003, and the Chief of Staff, Brigadier General Upinder Singh Klair, was appointed Head of Mission. The last four military observers completed their tour of duty and departed from the Mission on 1 October 2003. The authorized strength for the current mandate period was 235 civilian personnel, 67 of whom were recruited internationally and 168 locally. However, in view of the specific tasks for the final three-month period and the corresponding staffing requirements, the Mission reduced its personnel accordingly. As of 30 September 2003, the overall strength of UNIKOM rear headquarters was 135, consisting of the following:

(a) A total of four military observers, from Hungary, Italy, Pakistan and the Russian Federation;

(b) A total of 131 civilian staff, 38 of whom were recruited internationally and 93 locally.

14. During the mandate period, the Mission suffered a fatal traffic accident, resulting in the death of one international staff member and serious injuries to two others.

IV. Financial matters

15. In its resolution 57/330, the General Assembly authorized the Secretary-General to enter into commitments in an amount not exceeding $12 million for the period 1 July-31 October 2003, to be financed from the accumulated fund balance in the Special Account for the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission. In view of the closure of the Mission on 6 October 2003 and on the basis of the current level of expenditures for UNIKOM, the $12 million commitment authority approved by the General Assembly would suffice to cover the remaining activities of the Mission, including its liquidation. Actual expenditures incurred during that period will be reported to the General Assembly in the context of the performance report.

16. As at 31 July 2003, unpaid assessments to the Special Account for UNIKOM for the period since inception of the Mission to 30 June 2003 amounted to

$8.6 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations at the same date amounted to $1,306 million.

V. Liquidation arrangements

17. Following the suspension of its operations and the subsequent evacuation of most of its personnel to their home countries or safe havens in Brindisi, Italy, or Dhaka, Bangladesh, UNIKOM continued its operations in a small rear headquarters retained at the Kheitan support centre. Under the modified mandate provided under Security Council resolution 1490 (2003), UNIKOM undertook military and political liaison duties, carried out residual tasks for the Mission, such as recovery, reconciliation and disposal of assets, and provided support to other entities of the United Nations system in the region. At the same time, UNIKOM took the measures necessary for the termination of its mandate by 6 October 2003 and undertook arrangements for liquidation of the Mission in accordance with United Nations procedures.

18. Until March 2003, UNIKOM did not encounter major obstacles in implementing its mandate. It functioned as an established Mission with adequate facilities for its operations and the welfare of its personnel. The Governments of both Iraq and Kuwait cooperated with the Mission and on numerous occasions expressed satisfaction with UNIKOM's impartiality. Those relations were vital to establishing trust with the parties and in effectively carrying out the Mission's mandated tasks. The excellent working relations established over the years with the Government of Kuwait continued during the final months of the Mission's mandate.

19. Since March 2003, the Kheitan support centre has been reinforced with additional infrastructure and various facilities for offices, as well as logistical support services, such as communications equipment, workshops and accommodation, in order to function as the UNIKOM headquarters. Those facilities were also enhanced with a view to providing adequate support to other United Nations offices and international organizations carrying out humanitarian activities in Iraq. In the process, valuable experience was gained in liaison activities with host-country authorities, other government representatives and agencies in the changed post-war circumstances.

20. The Mission is now in the final stages of its technical liquidation. Assets have been reallocated to other United Nations humanitarian agencies and peacekeeping missions, including 12 vehicles, several generators and communications equipment sent to the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq; 89 vehicles and spare parts sent to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan; one aviation fuel truck sent to the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara; and spare parts sent to the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Infrastructure and other items left in situ will be proposed for donation to the Government of Kuwait.

VI. Observations

21. As I stated in my last report to the Council, the United Nations can be proud of the achievements of UNIKOM. In its last phase, as a residual peacekeeping presence operating in a difficult environment affected by the conflict in Iraq from mid-March 2003 until the completion of its mandate, UNIKOM proved to be a significant source of support for humanitarian agencies deployed in Iraq and Kuwait. Having thus accomplished the tasks mandated by the Security Council in its resolution 1490 (2003), the Mission will close on 6 October 2003.

22. In conclusion, I wish to pay tribute to Brigadier General Upinder Singh Klair, who has served with dedication as Head of Mission during UNIKOM's last three months, to all the Force Commanders who led UNIKOM over the past 12 years, and to the men and women under their command for the dedicated service they rendered to the cause of peace and the ideals of the United Nations. I would like to pay special tribute to those in UNIKOM who lost their lives or sustained injuries during the performance of their duties for the cause of peace.